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The Relationship Between Obesity, Lifestyles and Employment Status

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(The paper is available upon request from the authors)

Abstract:

This paper investigates the relationship between obesity and lifestyles in the light of different employment status. The distinction between Employed and Not-employed individuals is used in order to represent the different constraints that face the two types of individuals: the average Employed has more money and less time and the average Not-employed has less money and more time. Typically, healthy eating is more expensive than less healthy lower quality food and the price of healthy eating is usually outwith the control of individuals. By contrast, the price of physical activity can be controlled by individuals, but only when they have sufficient free time. Economic theory would then suggest that where obesity may be perceived to be a problem by the individual, the Employed will engage more in (expensive but not time consuming) healthy eating and the Not-employed will engage more in (less expensive but time consuming) physical activity. The paper uses quantile regression in order to investigate these effects at different segments of the BMI distribution. Instrumental variables are used in order to control for endogeneity bias. Conditional estimates lend support to the predictions of economic theory: the Employed engage more in healthy eating and the Not-employed engage more in physical activity.

Keywords: Obesity; Employment Status

JEL classification: I12

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